

REMARKS

Applicant's attorney thanks the Examiner for the careful consideration given to this case. As explained below, the claims have been amended to place them in condition for allowance. For convenience, the matters raised in the Office action are discussed below in the same order as presented by the Examiner.

The claims have been amended to include the subject matter of various dependent claims in each of independent claims 1 and 6.

More particularly, claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of claims 2, 3, and 4. Claim 5 has been amended to depend from claim 1.

Claim 6 has been amended to include the subject matter of claims 8 and 9.

Claim 7 has been retained and claim 8 has been cancelled.

Claim 9 has been amended to depend from claim 6 and present the subject matter contained in claim 10.

Claim 10 has been amended to depend from claim 7.

Claims 11, 12 and 13 have been amended to depend from claim 1.

Claims 14 and 15 have not been amended.

Claims 16, 17 and 18 are cancelled.

The claim rejections under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, are overcome by amendment. Specifically, the

phrase "or the like" has been deleted from claims 1 and 6.

The amendment of claims herein renders moot the rejection of claims 1 - 3, 5 - 8, 10, 12, 15 - 16 and 18 under 35 USC 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,249,690 to Mashiko.

The rejection of claims 4, 9, 11, 13 - 14 and 17 under 35 USC 103(a) as unpatentable over Mashiko in view of Japanese Publication No. 2000-312178 to Ukinobu is overcome by applicant's perfection of its priority date herein. Specifically, Ukinobu was published on November 7, 2000 and applicant herein perfects its entitlement to the March 31, 2000 filing date of Japanese priority case 2000-100009. To that end, there is submitted herewith an English language translation of the priority document having the translator's certificate attached.

As noted above, claim 1 now contains the subject matter of prior claim 4 and claim 6 contains the subject matter of prior claim 9. Accordingly, claims 1 and 6 are in condition for allowance. Similarly, dependent claims 5, 7 and 9 - 13 are in condition for allowance.

For all of the foregoing reasons, all of the claims presently of record are in condition for final allowance and such action is requested.

If there are any further fees required by this amendment not covered by an enclosed check, or if no check is enclosed, please charge the same to Deposit Account No. 16-0820, Order No. 34129.

Respectfully submitted,

By: 
Joseph J. Corso, Reg. No. 25845

1801 East Ninth Street
Suite 1200
Cleveland, Ohio 44114-3108

(216) 579-1700

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